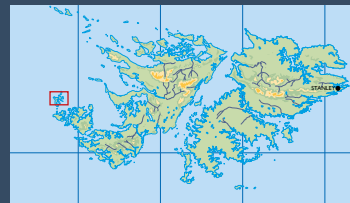


NORTH ISLAND

Information sheet



Falklands Conservation own and manage a number of offshore islands and mainland sites across the Falkland Islands. FC strive to manage these national assets to conserve and enhance them for future generation of Islanders.

Island Summary

North Island lies to the north of New Island in the south-west of the Falklands archipelago. North Island is without doubt one of the premier scenic and wildlife locations of the Falkland Islands. Fringed by towering sea cliffs it is of national and global importance for its fauna and flora, with colonial nesting seabirds, including black-browed albatrosses and rockhopper penguins; a rodent-free status with restricted range endemics, such as Cobb's Wren and tussacbird; southern sea lion and South American fur seal haul-outs; extensive areas of pristine tussac and bluegrass habitats; and the largest known population of the globally *Endangered* and endemic Falkland rockcross.

Ecology

Physical

North Island is 75 ha in area and rises abruptly to a height of 75m above sea-level. The island is completely ringed by cliffs with a central "table-top" plateau above. The sea cliffs on the exposed western side rise 70m straight from the sea to the plateau top. On the east side the cliffs are lower but undercut along much of their length and rise up in a series of broken bands of rock scarp and steep tussac slopes. Only towards the south-east corner of the island do the cliffs decrease in height to allow landing and access up some lower slabs and rock steps. Landing is weather and sea-state dependent and the landing-site often occupied by sea lions that must be avoided.

The underlying geology of North Island is comprised of the Devonian West Falkland Port Stephen Formation (pp 400 million years). Within this formation the rocks of the South Harbour Member are characterised by medium and coarse-grained feldspathic sandstones.

Habitat Value

Three main habitats occur on the plateau of North Island: tussac, bluegrass and cushion heath. The tussac growth of the southern half of the island is mature, thick and difficult to traverse. It shows little sign of any past impacts and is considered a pristine tussac habitat. The northern half comprises a mosaic of bluegrass, cushion heath and dispersed tussac. Whilst now largely recovered and thriving this northern area was burnt in 1988 and it is unknown how the balance between the 3 component parts of the mosaic may have changed subsequent to the fire. The open habitat allows for a good level of plant diversity

North Island is rodent-free, which means it supports the endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird and higher numbers of passerine songbirds.



North Island (51°39'22.8"S & 61°13'46.0"W) is the northernmost island in the New Island Group of islands located in the south-west of the Falkland Islands. It lies 2.5 km north of New Island and 600m north of Saddle Island.

Relevant Legislation and Policy

Statutory

None

Non-statutory

North Island is part of the New Island Group Important Bird Area (IBA Ref FK 11; Falklands Conservation, 2006) and New Island Group Key Biodiversity Area (KBA Ref FKL-11; Taylor *et al.*, 2016). North Island would undoubtedly qualify as an Important Plant Area due to its large population of Falklands rockcross. However, at the time of the designations no plant survey had yet been completed on the island and hence the occurrence was unknown. The population is several times larger than at other IPA sites that have been designated on the basis of Falkland rockcross occurrence.

IMAGES North Island from the north looking south (left); vanilla daisy (right); OVERLEAF black-browed albatross colony.



Species Diversity

A total of 19 bird species have been recorded on North Island with 15 species recorded as probably breeding and a further 2 as possibly breeding. This includes all 3 Falkland Islands endemic bird species (Cobb's wren, tussacbird and Falklands flightless steamer duck) and 5 Endemic sub-species

There are substantial populations of colonial nesting seabirds. Black-browed albatrosses nest all along the eastern cliffs and with c. 30,000 breeding pairs North Island is the 4th most important site in the Falklands holding 5% of the Falklands population. Rockhopper penguins number almost 4,800 pairs and breed amongst the albatrosses. North Island is the 9th largest site of the 35 locations where rockhopper penguins are known to occur and holds c.1.5% of the Falklands population.

North Island is an important haul-out site for two pinniped species, southern sea lion and South American fur seal, and may form a small satellite breeding colony.

The *Near Threatened* Striated Caracara is strongly associated to the seabird and pinniped colonies and the estimated breeding population of 31 breeding pairs is considered stable to increasing. Twenty-two plant species have been recorded on North Island, though a full plant survey has not been undertaken and more species are likely present. Four endemic species are recorded and widely spread across the northern half of the island; Vanilla daisy, Coastal nassauvia, Falklands smooth ragwort, and Falkland rockcress. Most notable is the population of the globally *Endangered*, legally protected and endemic Falkland rockcress. Falklands rockcress is known from only 8 extant sites, with North Island holding by far the largest population so far found.

Key Threats and Management

The island is currently rodent-free and the introduction of rodents has the potential to impact species, habitats, and the ecological ecosystem functioning of the island. Species including the endemic Cobb's wren and tussacbird would be locally extirpated by the introduction of rodents, and the overall diversity and density of almost all bird species would be reduced.

Invasive plants if introduced can modify habitats. Sheep's sorrel and Prickly sow-thistle are present. Prickly sow-thistle should be uprooted whenever encountered.

Falkland rockcress white rust disease is already present. It is not known whether this is a natural native rust or an introduced rust from brassicas and if so how it may have arrived.

Strict biosecurity with rigorous inspection of kit and cleaning of clothing and footwear should be undertaken before any visit.

A fire previously occurred across the north end of North Island in 1988 and whilst the area has largely recovered and revegetated impacts can still be observed. Tussac is extremely flammable with dry pedestal skirts and large amounts of leaf litter. Likewise cushion heath contains dry material within the bogs. North Island is considered extremely high risk.

Notable birds, plants, marine mammals & habitats of North Island

Southern rockhopper penguin	<i>Vulnerable</i>	Sedge (grass) wren	Falkland sub-species
Black-browed albatross	<i>Least Concern</i> ACAP	White-bridled finch	Falkland sub-species
Southern giant petrel	<i>Least Concern</i> ACAP	Southern sea lion	Haul-out
Striated caracara	<i>Near Threatened</i>	South American fur seal	Haul-out
Tussacbird	<i>Endemic</i> <i>Near Threatened</i>	Falklands Rockcress	<i>Endemic</i> <i>Endangered</i>
Cobb's wren	<i>Endemic</i> <i>Least Concern</i>	Vanilla daisy (E)	<i>Endemic</i>
Falklands flightless steamer duck	<i>Endemic</i>	Coastal Nassauvia (E)	<i>Endemic</i>
Falkland austral thrush	Falkland sub-species	Falkland smooth ragwort (E)	<i>Endemic</i>
Dark-faced ground tyrant	Falkland sub-species	Tussac habitat	
Long-tailed meadowlark	Falkland sub-species	Bluegrass acid grassland habitat	Nationally threatened

Citation Falklands Conservation (2022). North Island (New Island Group) Management Plan 2022.

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